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ART AND PROGRESS

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AN IMPORTANT RESTORATION

The projected restoration of the historic Center Church, on New Haven "Green," to its original appearance by the removal of the many coats of drab paint with which its brickwork for more than half a century has been covered, is of more than local interest. It signifies a renewed appreciation of the appropriate use of material and would indicate in a measure a restoration of good taste. When Center Church was designed by Ithiel Town in 1812 good taste in such matters prevailed, but an era of un wisdom was approaching. Not only did the architectural design of buildings deteriorate rapidly in the three succeeding decades, but artistic expression of every

form seemed to be perverted. The furniture, the private houses and public buildings which came into existence during the middle of the 19th century were in most instances without artistic merit. Our nation at that time had passed out of its infancy and into the age of awkward self-consciousness. Naturalness was temporarily lost, there was pretense in everything. Simple designs were cast aside, simple materials scorned, imitation much practiced and lauded. Brick was thought to be a much too common material with which to build a church, therefore in 1845 Center Church, the chief ornament of the old New Haven "Green," was painted drab to simulate stone. Of course no one was really ever deceived, but the public mind was satisfied and precedent established. Well might it be said, beware of the man with the fresh paint-pot, for frequently he is no less a vandal than the man with the inquisitive cane. New paint is so attractive, covering a multitude of shortcomings if not sins. To remove the paint from the walls of the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington cost a good deal but the result in added dignity was worth the price. Of course these masonry walls were never intended to be painted. The similar restoration of the old State House, Boston, under the direction of the Boston Society of Antiquarians, and the restoration of the old Chapel at Amherst College are likewise notable. Beneath thick coats of paint many solid mahogany doors and balustrades to say nothing of fine pieces of furniture are still masquerading in old Colonial mansions. It was a strange mania, this inclination to cover everything with paint, but no more strange or perverted than some of our own to-day. Only a few weeks ago it was seriously proposed in Congress to standardize all Government architecture, securing once for all plans for buildings of specified price to be utilized uniformly and indiscriminately. Under these circumstances we can not safely throw stones at those of our forerunners who covered up brickwork with paint.

It is hard even to-day for people to

realize that there is a definite relation between design and material. This, however, the early builders and the best builders of all ages understood. No one can suppose for a moment that if Ithiel Town had thought that Center Church was destined to be painted drab, he would have produced the present design, the classical details of which are only seen to advantage when painted white. To be sure by the restoration there may be some loss in unity of effect, but that loss will be more than compensated for by the recovery of sincerity and the restoration of the original well considered design. To New Haven this restoration has historical as well as artistic significance. If carried out as projected the city will recover an architectural monument of permanent importance and will gain in honor as one who leads public opinion. We do not want to turn back—to make progress we must go forward—but the recognition of the best in the past and its emulation is always the first step toward advance.

NOTES

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS' EXHIBITIONS FOR THE SEASON 1912-13

The American Federation of Arts has issued a tentative schedule of exhibitions for the season 1912-13 together with a circular giving the conditions under which these exhibitions are sent out. Announcement is made of sixteen exhibitions—three of oil paintings, two of water colors and one each of the following: original works by American Illustrators, Architectural Design, together with a representation of the allied arts, photographs of American Mural Paintings, with original studies and sketches in color, photographs of American Sculpture, photographs of American Paintings, Arts and Crafts objects, representative Art School work, work done in the Elementary Schools, Mezzotint Engravings, Pictorial Photographs of the Scott country, and an exhibition of oils, water colors, etchings,

illustrations and bronzes. These exhibitions are all assembled under the direction of an expert committee and are sent without charge to chapters of the Federation; to other organizations a small fee is charged to defray the expense of clerical service. The cost of transportation, insurance, etc., is divided proportionately between the organizations to which exhibitions are sent. Full particulars can be obtained by application to the Secretary. The demand for these exhibitions is steadily increasing. Already circuits for five have been made up. In the awakening of interest, thus indicated, the middle west leads.

SCULPTURE EXHIBITION

The National Sculpture Society will assemble, early in the fall, a collection of small bronzes, 200 in number, by American sculptors, which will be sent out as a traveling exhibition. This collection will be shown in November at the Art Institute of Chicago; in December at the John Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis; in January at the City Art Museum, St. Louis; in February at the Albright Gallery, Buffalo; in March at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; in April at the Cincinnati Art Museum; in May in Philadelphia and in June in Baltimore, where the circuit will be concluded. The committee in charge of this exhibition is composed of J. Scott Hartley, Chairman, who is Secretary of the National Sculpture Society, Adolph A. Weinman and Mahonri M. Young.

In addition to this exhibition the American Federation of Arts will assemble, through the co-operation of the National Sculpture Society, a collection of medals, plaques and other works in relief by the foremost American sculptors, which will also be sent on a circuit during the coming season. This exhibition, which will be unique, will, it is thought, not only attract much attention, but go far toward demonstrating the beauty and charm of a phase of sculpture highly esteemed by artists and connoisseurs, but little as yet appreciated by the general public.